

FADE IN:

INT. AETHRON CRYOGENIC REGENESIS INSTITUTE -- CHAMBER ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Rows of CALDOHYDREN CRYOGENIC CHAMBERS hum steadily as fluid circulates and systems stabilize.

CODY.

JOLENE.

SEBASTIAN.

JULIETTA.

All submerged, all unconscious. The HUM is now steady, controlled. Only one chamber remains different. KATERINA, her eyes, open still, unblinking. A MASKED TECH moves past her chamber, checks the readings, but doesn't look inside, he doesn't need to. A small flicker... the readings glitch briefly. The TECH pauses and leans closer. Inside, Katerina's eyes close, perfect timing. The TECH nods to himself and moves on. Silence returns.

A beat.

Katerina's eyes open again, slow, deliberate. She inhales, but no air moves. The mask over her face, fog doesn't form and she smiles, faintly.

KATERINA
(quiet)
Well... this is inconvenient.

Her hand twitches - restrained. She doesn't struggle, instead, she looks at the restraints almost curious. Then, a subtle shift in her wrist. A small, concealed SPEAR-LIKE BLADE extends from a leather brace. A precise movement ...SNAP, the restraint breaks, clean, silent. Another, and another. Within seconds, she is free. She sits up slowly the fluid sliding from her skin and the chamber door opens without alarm. She steps out, barefoot, unbothered.

INT. CHAMBER ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A MASKED SECURITY GUARD turns and sees her with confusion, too slow, Katerina moves, not fast but precise. She closes the distance and drives the blade into his throat, upward, controlled. He collapses

silently and she catches him, lowers him carefully.

KATERINA
(quiet, to him)
You should really look up more.

She steps over him as another GUARD turns the corner and sees the body to raise his weapon. Katerina is already there inside his reach, a twist... his wrist breaks, the weapon drops, she takes it and fires once - clean. He drops to silence again, but the HUM continues, unaware.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR -- MOMENTS LATER

Katerina walks, calm, measured. Two more GUARDS ahead talking, unaware. She doesn't rush, she passes between them, in one movement, two cuts. They drop before they understand what happened and Katerina keeps walking.

INT. CONTROL SUITE -- MOMENTS LATER

Doors open and MAXIMILIAN VERLANTIS stands inside reviewing data. He doesn't turn.

MAXIMILIAN
You're not supposed to be awake.

Katerina leans against the doorway relaxed.

KATERINA
And yet... here we are.

Maximilian turns and sees her, a flicker of something, not fear, however, but recognition of Maximilian.

MAXIMILIAN
Fascinating, the true source of
immortality and, I have to say,
you are as beautiful as they say.

Katerina steps inside.

KATERINA
You say that like you're not
about to die. But, die you must.

Maximilian smiles slightly.

MAXIMILIAN
You won't kill me, Valoric.

A beat. Katerina tilts her head.

KATERINA
That's so adorable.

In an instant, she's in front of him and grabs his throat, then lifts him off the ground. Where his composure cracks.

MAXIMILIAN
(strained)
You don't understand...

KATERINA
No, Maximilian.

(beat)

KATERINA (CONT'D)
You don't understand.

She slams him into the console hard, screens flicker and she leans in very close.

KATERINA (CONT'D)
You took something that is very precious from me.

(now quiet)

KATERINA (CONT'D)
So now, you get to be useful.

Maximilian breathes harder now.

MAXIMILIAN
You really want to help them?

Katerina's grip tightens.

KATERINA
That would be the idea.

Maximilian laughs weakly.

MAXIMILIAN
Then you already know?

(beat)

MAXIMILIAN (CONT'D)
The only way out... is to win.

Silence. Katerina studies him.

KATERINA
Win what?

Maximilian gives a wide bloody smile.

MAXIMILIAN
The Grid.

That lands. Katerina's eyes narrow.

MAXIMILIAN (CONT'D)
You go in, beat every level...

(beat)

MAXIMILIAN (CONT'D)
You survive the races and win...
(quiet)

MAXIMILIAN (CONT'D)
Or, you become something else.

A beat. Katerina releases him and then, drives the blade through his chest clean and final. She watches him fade.

KATERINA
(soft)
I was hoping for something more original.

He dies into silence. Katerina turns, sees the control systems, the chambers, her friends, her decision made.

INT. SECURITY STATION -- MOMENTS LATER

From a dead guard, Katerina removes:

HEADSET

RADIO

Puts them on to static, she adjusts the channel.

KATERINA

(into mic, low)

If you can hear me...

(beat)

KATERINA (CONT'D)

This is Crimson Mist. I am going
to reenter the chamber... can you
hear me...

Static answers, she drops the radio and crushes it
under her heel.

INT. CHAMBER ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

She approaches an EMPTY CHAMBER, then looks at Cody,
Jolene, Sebastian and Julietta. A rare moment,
something almost human in her expression and then gone.
She steps into the chamber, the mask lowers, seals as
her wrist turns, the blade aligns with a control panel
and she fires... IMPACT. SYSTEMS SPIKE, the HUM surges,
violent white light consumes everything.

CUT TO WHITE.